Am ndments to the Claims

1. (Currently amended) A data collection and reporting method comprising the steps of, in a central system:

receiving a report concerning at least one parameter from at least one sender;

automatically extracting report data from the report and automatically storing the extracted report data in a memory;

for at least one third party, storing a set of party-specific rules in the memory;

associating the received report with the corresponding third party;

associating at least one fourth party with the sender and with at least one of the third parties; and

via the network, allowing access by the fourth party to at least a selected portion of the extracted report data from the respective sender;

in which:

the third party is an agency;

the fourth party is a client of the agency;

the sender is a person referred by the agency to the client and performs work tasks for the client;

the at least one parameter is time worked by the sender on behalf of the client; and

via a publicly accessible transmission network, allowing access by the agency and the client to respective party-specific portions of the extracted report data according to rules specific to each party and allowing interactive and iterative review, modification and/or annotation of the report data by the agency and client according to each party's respective specific rules;

whereby the central system is an intermediary system between the sender on the one hand and the agency and client on the other hand and exposes different interfaces to the sender, agency and client.

2. (Original) A method as in claim 1, further comprising the step of transferring a copy of the extracted report data to the third party via the network, whereby the transferred data resides at and is available for processing by the third party.

3. (Original) A method as in claim 2, further comprising the following steps:
storing the extracted data in the memory in a predetermined common format;
before transferring the extracted data to any third party, converting the extracted data into a format specified by the rules associated with that third party, whereby third parties operating different hardware platforms and processing software may receive and process extracted data from the same memory within the central system.

4. (Original) A method as in claim 1, further comprising the step of storing in the memory third-party indicated annotations associated with the extracted report data.

5. (Original) A method as in claim 1, further comprising the following steps:
receiving, from the third party, a confirmation or rejection indication relating to at least a portion of the extracted, stored report data; and
upon receipt of the rejection indication, directing the sender to resubmit a corrected report.

6. (Original) A method as in claim 1, further comprising the following steps:
storing an image of the report as received; and
via the network, allowing access by the third party to the image, whereby the third party is able to confirm the accuracy of the extracted report data.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Canceled)

9. (Original) A method as in claim 1, in which the report is a physical form, further comprising the steps of, within the central system:

automatically receiving from any of a plurality of the senders, via a transmission channel, an electronic representation of an image of the physical form, the form having a plurality of data fields, each corresponding to an indicator of at least a partial value of at least one of the parameters;

automatically identifying the location of the data fields in the received representation of the image of the form;

automatically extracting from the identified data fields the at least partial values of the corresponding parameters; and

automatically storing the extracted values in a predetermined common format in the memory for subsequent processing.

10. (Original) A method as in claim 9, in which the electronic representation of the image of the physical form is generated using a conventional facsimile machine, whereby the transmission channel is a standard telephone line.

11. (Original) A method as in claim 9, further including the step of transferring the stored extracted values to the third party via the network, all processing of the physical form after transmission by the sender up to and including transfer to the third party via the network thereby taking place automatically.

12. (Currently amended) A data collection and reporting method comprising the steps of, in a central system:

receiving a report concerning at least one parameter from at least one sender;

automatically extracting report data from the report and automatically storing the extracted report data in a memory in a predetermined common format;

for at least one third party, storing a set of party-specific rules in the memory;

associating the received report with the corresponding third party;

converting the extracted data into a format specified by the rules associated with that third party, whereby third parties operating different hardware platforms and processing software may receive and process extracted data from the same memory within the central system;

via a publicly accessible transmission network, allowing interactive and iterative access, review and modification and/or annotation by the third party to at least a selected third party-specific portion of the extracted report data according to that third party's corresponding party-specific rules;

transferring a copy of the extracted report data to the third party via the network, whereby the transferred data resides at and is available for processing by the third party;

associating at least one fourth party with the sender and with at least one of the third parties;

via the network, allowing interactive and iterative access, review and modification and/or annotation by a fourth party to at least a selected fourth party-specific portion of the extracted report data from the respective sender;

in which:

the third party is an agency;

the fourth party is a client of the employment agency;

the sender is a person referred by the agency to the client and performs work tasks for the client; and

the at least one parameter is time worked by the sender on behalf of the client;

the central system is an intermediary system between the sender on the one hand and the agency and client on the other hand and exposes different interfaces to the sender, agency and client.

13. (Original) A method as in claim 12, further comprising the following steps:

receiving, from the third party, a confirmation or rejection indication relating to at least a portion of the extracted, stored report data; and

upon receipt of the rejection indication, directing the sender to resubmit a corrected report.

14. (Original) A method as in claim 12, further comprising the following steps:

storing an image of the report as received; and

via the network, allowing access by the third party to the image, whereby the third party is able to confirm the accuracy of the extracted report data.

15. (Currently amended) A data collection and reporting system comprising a central system that includes:

I/O means for automatically receiving from any of a plurality of senders, via a transmission channel, a report concerning at least one parameter from at least one of the senders;

form processing means:

for automatically extracting report data from the report and for storing the extracted report data in a memory;

for at least one third party, for automatically storing a set of party-specific rules in the memory;

for associating the received report with the corresponding third party; and

via a publicly accessible transmission network, for allowing <u>interactive and iterative</u> access, review and modification and/or annotation by the third party to at least a <u>third party-specific,</u> selected portion of the extracted report data according to that third party's corresponding party-specific rules;

for associating at least one fourth party with the sender and with at least one of the third parties; and

via the network, for allowing interactive and iterative access, review and modification and/or annotation by the fourth party to at least a fourth party-specific, selected portion of the extracted report data from the respective sender;

in which:

the third party is an agency;

the fourth party is a client of the agency;

the sender is a person referred by the agency to the client and performs work tasks for the client;

the at least one parameter is time worked by the sender on behalf of the client; and

via a publicly accessible transmission network, allowing access by the agency and the client to the respective party-specific portions of the extracted report data according to rules specific to each party and allowing interactive and iterative review, modification and/or annotation of the report data by the agency and client according to each party's respective specific rules;

the central system is an intermediary system between the sender on the one hand and the agency and client on the other hand and exposes different interfaces to the sender, agency and client.

16. (Original) A system as in claim 15, in which the form processing means includes pull request processing means for transferring a copy of the extracted report data to the third party via the network, whereby the transferred data resides at and is available for processing by the third party.

17. (Original) A system as in claim 16, in which the form processing means further includes format conversion means:

for storing the extracted data in the memory in a predetermined common format; and

before transferring the extracted data to any third party, for converting the extracted data into a format specified by the rules associated with that third party, whereby third parties operating different hardware platforms and processing software may receive and process extracted data from the same memory within the central system.

18. (Currently amended) A method for doing business comprising the following steps:

receiving a report concerning at least one parameter from at least one sender;

automatically extracting report data from the report and automatically storing the extracted report data in a memory;

for at least one third party, storing a set of party-specific rules in the memory;

associating the received report with the corresponding third party;

via a publicly accessible transmission network, allowing access by the third party to at least a selected portion of the extracted report data according to that third party's corresponding party-specific rules;

associating at least one fourth party with the sender and with at least one of the third parties; and

via the network, allowing access by the fourth party to at least a selected portion of the extracted report data from the respective sender;

in which:

the third party is an agency;

the fourth party is a client of the agency;

the sender is a person referred by the agency to the client and performs work tasks for the client;

the at least one parameter is time worked by the sender on behalf of the client; and

via a publicly accessible transmission network, allowing access by the agency and the client to respective party-specific portions of the extracted report data according to rules specific to each party and allowing interactive and iterative review, modification and/or annotation of the report data by the agency and client according to each party's respective specific rules;

whereby the central system is an intermediary system between the sender on the one hand and the agency and client on the other hand and exposes different interfaces to the sender, agency and client;

and

charging the third party for the access.